

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BONN 14952 201650Z

53

ACTION EUR-25

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TAGS: MARR, MILI, NATO, SOPN, GW

SUBJECT: FRG PRESS REACTION TO HAIG APPOINTMENT

BEGIN SUMMARY: THERE HAS BEEN SOME WEST GERMAN PRESS REACTION TO THE HAIG APPOINTMENT. HOWEVER, MOST NEWS-PAPERS ONTENTED THEMSELVES WITH FACTUAL REPORTING. THE NEWSPAPERS WHICH DID COMMENT WERE: (A) RESIGNED TO THE APPOINTMENT; (B) CRITICAL; BUT (C) NOT BITTERLY HOSTILE. END SUMMARY

1. THE STUTTGARTER ZEITUNG, IN A SHORT ACCOUNT ENTITLED "WAS GENERAL HAIG THE MOVING POWER IN CONNECTION WITH NIXON'S AMNESTY?" REPEATED COMMENTS FROM TWO U.S. PRESS ACCOUNTS. ONE OF THESE FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES EMPHASIZED HAIG'S ALLEGED KEY ROLE IN THE NIXON PARDON. THE SECOND, AN AP REPORT, ALLEGED THAT THE ALLIANCE PARTNERS HAD SET ASIDE THEIR OBJECTIONS TO THE APPOINTMENT FOR FEAR OF ANNOYING PRESIDENT FORD TO THE POINT WHERE HE WOULD NO LONGER OPPOSE CONGRESSIONAL DEMANDS FOR U.S. TROOP REDUCTIONS IN EUROPE.

2. THE WESTDEUTSCHE ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG AND THE BONN
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PAGE 02 BONN 14952 201650Z

GENERAL-ANZEIGER PUBLISHED IDENTICAL ARTICLES BY THEIR

WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT EMIL BOELTE GIVING A RATHER SNIDE ACCOUNT OF GENERAL HAIG'S CAREER. THESE ACCOUNTS DESCRIBED ALLEGED EUROPEAN OBJECTIONS TO THE APPOINTMENT AND IMPLIED THAT THE GENERAL WAS AN ACCESSORY IN THE WATERGATE AFFAIR. THE TONE OF THE ARTICLES CAN BE ASCERTAINED BY THE HEADING OF THE WESTDEUTSCHE ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG "FORD NOMINATED HAIG IN SPITE OF OBJECTIONS BY THE ALLIANCE PARTNERS" AND BY ITS SUBHEADING "NEW NATO SUPREME COMMANDER MOSTLY HELD DESK JOBS."

3. THE FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE PUBLISHED A RATHER LONG ARTICLE, BY ITS WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT JAN REIFENBERG, ENTITLED "FROM WATERGATE TO NATO," EMPHASIZING GENERAL HAIG'S DEVOTION TO FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON. IT ENDED ON A CAUTIONARY NOTE TO THE EFFECT THAT "HAIG NOW HAS TO PROVE HIS CAPABILITY AS A COORDINATOR AND HE HAS TO SHOW THAT IN RARE CASES GENERALS CAN ALSO BE GOOD POLITICIANS."

4. THE FINAL SIGNIFICANT PRESS COMMENT TO COME TO THE EMBASSY'S ATTENTION WAS FROM THE EDITOR OF DIE ZEIT, THEO SOMMER. IT CAST DOUBTS ON WHETHER GENERAL HAIG IS CAPABLE OF UNDERTAKING THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF NATO COMMANDER. IT STATED "PRESIDENT FORD WOULD HAVE INTRODUCED HIMSELF BETTER TO THE EUROPEANS BY TAKING THEIR MISGIVINGS SERIOUSLY."

5. THE ONLY POLITICAL COMMENT THUS FAR CAME FROM THE YOUNG SOCIALISTS WHO WERE SHARPLY CRITICAL AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED.
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